WIZARD AVAIL

THE STRONGEST UNDER THE STARS

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(Chapter 1)

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Chapter 1, The Lonely Island of Salus:

Once upon a time, there was a simple island, an average-sized one not too big, not too small.

The island floated in the ash blackened canvas filled with its beacons of light and stretched clouds of colorful red and purple sparkles where some mortals derive life from. Great forests and mountains that lay on great green acres, weaved together back into a shape by the riverbeds and tall mountains poking the sky, and the vast lakes which all life bipedal and fin swimming around; encouraging small settlements which would arise famed settlements and gossip filled and technological evolving cities in the further brighter ages.

Which the only thing that divided the small world and the from breathless cold of the void filled with it's beacons was a sea, and past that sea was a transparent barrier of light blue color. Containing the oxygen which allowed to prosper breathy calm grass, large towering trees, and beings of less... "slow" nature. Erratic and eager, smart and mistake ridden… they formed their towns. Though the creatures… well, without hands, eating from the well-spring lakes and bountiful woods. They all survived off each other, each dead prey animal a small meal for the hunters, each hunter a meal for a predator, each fruit a harvest for a gatherer, and each lost one a feast for a hidden wicker tree among the unmoving trees doomed to see the ends of time. The land was dubbed by its founder and its many unique people and races: "The Lonely Island of Salus ("saw-lis")".

This land was both good and bad, but balanced... which made life hard, but sometimes very fun. Though this wasn't how it always was, and there wasn't always peace... the land was formed and forged by a powerful conjurer of magic, both wise and older than the elder trees and flower sprites. Powerful as a mountain and as gentle as a leaf on the breeze, he was an obsessive master of magic and knowledge, he was Supreme Sorcerer Ordo, the founder and master of Salus. He made it to hide from the dark powers, and to bring another chance for life. It was so, until in a dark palace conjured by unnatural forces, the dark warlock known as Sid and his monstrous allies plunged their flames, clubs, blade, and magic onto Ordo and made him crippled. Ordo managed to escape back into his tower stood at the center of Salus and overlooked it all to the point that the very horizon of the sea could be seen on the tower's top.

Ordo's library which was also the top of the tower was huge compared to the stone column holding it in the air with rounded three roofs with brown shingles that were pointed at their edges. There is were Ordo lived, and kept all of his spells which the injured Ordo searched with emphatic panic until he found one that could work, throwing and tossing old papers and magically items around and found a mysterious blade and stared at awe at it, before

refocusing himself and shoving down his endlessly deep side pockets of his blue wizardry robe. His long white beard swaying side to side and messy bed hair as he sprinted back to his desk and prepared the sutra and gestures of this risky spell.

In incomprehensible distance away, a boy known as Oscar Hériman just came back from his long day of high school and quickly assented up the chairs of the pitch black house and into his bedroom, lit by one orange light by his messy bed. His loose red t-shirt and black sporty shorts dragged while Oscar pulled himself into his bed, a brown haired individual with bruises on his eyes and face and scars of past fights which he had no chance of winning littered across his body. He sighed and secretly wished for something, before he laid his head against his pillow and went asleep. Suddenly when he awoke, he was flying, a force seemingly pulling his legs across space and time, entire planets and stars passing by him in milliseconds in this strange magically blue wormhole... he was terrified. Stars eventually became a blur as the wormhole of magic ripped through reality to places beyond Oscar's imagination.... Things too wild and mad to put on parchment or converse. Then the wormhole slowed down gradually as a green speck came into view, which he was curious by, but then his eyes opened wide as it got larger and larger and he slowed down more... it was a floating green island in the middle of space, and Oscar was not slowly down. He prepared himself for his own demise, covering his face with his arms and curling up. However, nothing came of it... he unfolded and opened his eyes to see he was in a library of brick stone, lit by dim orangish yellow candle light. His vision blurred trying to regain his senses from the fever dream of a trip, he could make out a cloaked long white bearded man behind him and pulled himself up with a wood chair to gain back his footing.

"Welcome, Oscar Hériman, son of Sean and Shannon Hériman." The man called to him, now obvious to Oscar to be an old man, with clear strained wrinkles of his face and murk in his white beard, like it hadn't been cleaned for a decade. And it seemed he was also injured, with a fancy carved wood crutch under his right shoulder. Though he was old and crippled, he seemed like a husk, close to dying... and yet, his eyes and expression were filled a kind of electric unyielding power, like a powerful flame that cannot go out. It seemed the old man, probably a wizard by his ocean blue rob of littered golden stars and crescents, what Sean would guess to be a pajama hat.

"Hel-hello?"

“Sorry, I brought you here for a very long way. Let me introduce myself. I am Ordo, the master of magic in the land you are in. Some call me a wizard, or powerful sorcerer... but I always considered myself a learned scholar.”

“I know what wizards are.”

“Oh good! Then, you are familiar with magic?”

“Um no, I hadn’t ever used magic.”

“Well bugger... well I know this would be a surprise for any of the... Géai ("chai") realm?..."

"Um... it's Earth. Are you telling me we aren't on-"

"Earth, got it... Ok I brought you here because I need a being of strong spirit and potential to help me. Don’t worry, I will prepare you for what you need and what will come and train until you can do what you must do.”

“Must do? Well the hell are you talking about? This is start to seem dangerous.”

“It is... It is very... a darkness has come over this land, which its inhabitants call: “Salus, The Lonely Island”. A conjurer of the dark arts cloaked himself in black vampiric cap overshadowed by his red hot lightning has gathered his allies who all are both monstrous and unique, though too weak individually to conquer this land fully. But together they are the greatest threat to peace Salus has ever seen, and I cannot even take them on because of these damned injuries."

Oscar was curious over the circular chamber structure around him of rough brick stone, turning from a side glare to full attention stare at the glassless stone window. It wasn't like a normal window in a normal home where there was a separate of sky and wooded ground by horizon in the distance, but seemingly just calm blue of the nightsky, though hard to tell with a thick white fog continuing passing over the view. He rushed to it; bulldozing passed the night clothed wizard and saw the almost most shocking sight of his late evening. The fog wasn't fog, but clouds... and the sky wasn't from afar but he was in it... he looked down and saw trees as small as ants and mountains and lakes the size of playsets. And over the distance, a great sea which strangely sold quite still and a seemingly never ending ocean horizon. He looked more vertically down, and saw the thin column that carried the tower up, an unimaginable drop that he only thought a thrill seeking skydiver would see. Even his ears were ringing and closing up from the high winds and air pressure of putting his head through the window... It was beyond verbal explanation, Oscar completely and utterly floored...

"How do you not hear the loudness from inside?"

"Magic is very useful tool."

"Ok, but why are we in the *fricking* sky!?"

"You think I want any blood-hungry warlord mortal or powerful warlock or witch to come here and steal my greatest secrets? If they could get up here and past the strong protective diamond enchantments I put on this tower, then they are beyond my skill and power... and all is truly lost on this diverse but very little island."

"Now stop asking so many questions and *listen*." *Ordo turning his head and pointing to his right ear emphasize.*

"Can I ask just one more?"

Sighing, Ordo straightens himself

"One. And only one. Then no more for the rest of this night."

"So... umm... you *are* a wizard. In this place, there are people like you, and warriors, barbarians, fricking paladins or something? Why do you need me, I have no experience fighting magical beings or evils... i'm just a high school graduate from Earth."

"There are few willing to go under a wizard... that kind of path demands much more of the mind than any. Few people here have that kind of mind or are even willing to give up their ways. Archers, barbarians, and a... paladin?-yes... neither I offered or seen their wants and desires... They would not abandon their-"

"Wait, you just said you see their desires? What does that even mean? Like... like are you peeping in their minds?"

"Well, explaining like that makes it seem I'm being malicious, Sean. I merely see what I need to see, specifically if anyone would suffice as a sorcerer. Though these are dark days, and accomplishment through bravery... battle to battle against the ever-unyielding shadow. They care for experience with the blade and bow... to jump headfirst into a wholly new venture like magic casting, is unappealing and even cursed. Magic, like enchantments to their weapons, is what they prefer more."

"That's it? Isn't this land magical? There's got to be more then-"

Ordo raises his hand with his palm facing Oscar, signaling him to quiet down.

"The ones who know magic are either remaining on my foe's side, or hate being under another."

The room was bright with strange glass cylinders that glowed with trapped fireflies, *polearms from dead men and blades that felt like they whispered into your ear to take them.*
"These..."

Avail randomly pointed around, circling his finger and eyes around the weaponry and looked back to Ordo. ***"-these are all yours?"***

"Now they are... but they once were in worn battled hands and before that they were forged early in time, when Salus was part of a greater world."

"What do you mean when "Salus" didn't exist? This island didn't exist?"

"I'm not a textbook or a scroll, Sean... That's knowledge that's far from needing to be in that little head of yours, there's other things that I need to store there that have much greater importance... Now, focus your mind to the now, to the basics..."

He went to the end of the room and grabbed a book from a shelf.

"I will teach you to become a competent enough warrior and then elementary wizard, first combat and then some defense... that's all I can do for you at least in a week, I will give you some spells by then and show you how to use them. In total two weeks, and the warlock wouldn't have taken over the final strong holds in such little time."

"Strong holds? Is there a war going on?"

"The warlock and his allies are not the only ones to defeat, but just the ringleaders. They have thousands of underlings that are causing great chaos and harm. That's why knowing how to fight is very much necessary, to use a good measure of defense and navigation through tough terrain you will absolutely travel."

"But... but! I didn't sign up for any of this!"

"You promised, didn't you Sean?"

Sean sighs heavily, putting his hand on the cheek of his face.

"Ugh god... ok... just teach me."

And so Oscar is taught by the wizard Ordo, beacon of Salus, and Despot of Datum, everything there is to know about how to fight both with fists and basic understanding of how to swing a blade and block with a blade.

Teach how to move like the wind, imagine yourself like air that is pushed away by the force of an incoming projectile. To punch a foe with all your body and back, to aim yourself and balance your footwork like you would aim a arrow with the string and bow, the deliverers of the arrow. Oscar struggled with this a bit, as he was temptable and reckless... angry at failure and rage at imagined slights. But he eventually learned to calm and success came with it. After a week and one more night, he was ready to learn the basic spells.

"Telekinesis, the art of using your magic to move an object desired and what I dub: "The Air bending Push"..."

"What's the air push?"

"I'll show you... you bend your body backward, move your right foot a distant away behind your left foot. And you grip your hands together and focus your breathing. You breath like the thunder shock, and you push forward with all you will and might."

A powerful wind came from Ordo's move which shocked the entire tower, the fireflies' light disappearing and reappearing in flashing, like an earthquake.

"Wow... that's INSANE!"

"That's a limited version, though good to push enemies away and move boulders."

"When will I need to move boulders?"

"There is a decent about of mountain trials in Salus, you will encounter one."

The two trained for quite away after that, days of endless tedium and exercise which made Oscar both made his brain and limbs exhausted. Though when the time was up, Ordo was impressed by his physical improvements even in such a short time span. But his magic still definitely was inexperienced and faulty. Though, Ordo still thought he was ready and dubbed him: "Avail The 7th Apprentice of Ordo, and the 33rd Mortal Wizard in Mundus's history".

"You may not feel ready, but ready is subjective... we all are ready when the fight has already began, the thing is we do not choose when it happens and never truly ready for how it begins."

"I feel... so much power in my fingertips... I feel completely different from before."

"It's your reward... but don't let it get into your head, magic is something that can do almost anything, but it's one of the few things that can fire back in full force. Be careful with your power, Avail."

Avail walk beside Ordo as he went to a giant box covered with a thin pale brown sheet of fluffy leather. Behind it was a slightly decayed mural of three figures under a ancient clockwork-like triangular object that emulated light over them. The one to the right was a pale blue mage, a female thief of white and red with a oak bow and arrow, and a steel clad armored knight with a obvious "roundness" to his figure wielding a long handle hammer and broadsword. The leather sheet had lines and outlines of circles filled with mysterious runes that glowed and dissipated when the cloth was pulled back by Ordo. Unveiled, it was a glass

container which had in it a black steel blade with glowing blue lines evenly spaced out along the blade and it's sharp edge which prickled Avail's finger just staring at it.

"This is the blade's black material of the deepest depths... and the blue glowing ruby from the highest place closest to holy sun and beacons... and finished and forged on the edges of great falling water into deep blackness in the high kingdom of Excultus of Orbis."

"Ohh." Avail's young mind starting to get excited.

"The Aithér/Aethér Blade ("ee-thir (like third)"), it's handle forged by the surface of the Orbis's bright sun and it's blade made in Orbis's darkest and deepest pits, where not even a single stray of light can enter. It is the very representation of both the bright moral virtues and the dark ambitions... yin and yang as you Géai realmers call it."

"Earth."

Ordo looked to Avail, and stared not in angry.

"Do not mistake my missaying as an old fool's misinterpretation. I know well what you have said, but I do not wish to call it such. You're people call it something else, and I'll call it what the being that weaved it called it. You understand, Oscar?"

"...yeah."

*"Any who... the blade is of two sides... ne may take the other, but the balance... balance can defeat and united either side to a power which could threaten even a god... but, misused with one leaning side, one single direction of intent... and well (*puts up his walking stick in the air*)... it is as useful as the walking stick I got in here with! Haha (*laughed in a croak*)... And yes, Avail... it is very cool."*

Ordo takes the blade into his hands.

"You could read my excitement?"

Ordo gruffly chuckling a bit with an old lonely man’s charms.

“Haha… I don’t want to spoil a wizard’s ways to you yet, Oscar. It’s so much more fun to learn on your own.”

Ordo gestures for Avail to take it, but when Avail's hand greedily reaches for it he takes it back.

"You swear on your most precious possessions, and the things you love dearly and die to protect for... that you will never misuse this scared artifact on your God's life and your family's, my own, and all of Salus... and if this vow undone will bring the worse of things you cannot even imagine."

"Um... yes."

"Be sure, Avail... be absolute. Will you uphold this vow, or risk punishment by the very universe itself?"

"Yes, I swear on my family's, my master's, and on everything I love and hold dear... that I will never misuse this blade."

A drumming sound could be heard coming about, like reality itself moved slightly. The noise like a drum and whispers in every corner and yet far away to see the source...

"It is done..." Ordo states in a stoic manner, holding the blade with elegance and gentleness. *"The blade has accepted your oath, it has now bound itself to you. Even in death, this blade will never leave your hand for long."*

"That sounds... haha... that's insane."

"That's reminds me, I think some trio of heroes from the outer lands, the lands of the Three Angles of Form... If I read correctly, it was a land with very powerful artifacts and machines beyond Orbis and Salus. Anyway, the heroes used that blade to defeat a demonic spirit that threatened their entire world."

"Cool"

"Anyway, you better get going, I will send you on your way."

"What do you-ahh!"

A sudden gust of wind picked up Avail and gradually lifted him in the air, his toes dipping into the edge of the stone window frame, trying to stay on ground as he dangled above a drop that was above the very clouds, and the whole world beneath.

"Oh no! No!-no-no-no"

"Have safe travels down there, my apprentice. Remember your training. And remember to get the pieces of a special key from each ally of Sid."

"WHAT?! You crazy?"

"I'll explain more to you down there, good luck!"

"Down wheRREE?!-AHHH!"

Avail is sent out the window and plummeting downward toward the very distance ground, Avail screaming for his life (“AHHHH!”) as he fell like a meteor toward the giant snowy peaks of a cloudy mountain range. He fell through the pale grey clouds and covered in snowflakes he fell downward into a hill of white snow in the center of a snowy town. His body falling straight in, leaving a silhouette impress in the deep snow… the snow was unmoving for a few minutes, the cold and ice building up more and more. Until the short frame of Avail burst out of the snow, and into a strange new place.

"I survived... I SURVIVED! I MUST BE INVINCIBLE!!! HAAHAA! I'M FRICKING FIRE PROOF AND SKYDIVE PROOF! HAHAA!"

"Don't be so confident yet, friend."

"What!? Ordo? What! You implanted something in my head!? Get it out!"

"I'm speaking through your mind, I want to inform you what I was elaborating on before.

"Sure?"

"Before we do anything, we must find you a way of getting an blessing from Amica."

"What's Amica?"

"Well it's where you are… *silly earthling*.***"***

"This town?... woow..."

Avail looked around at this town, he was on the edge off a brown soil road with a large red Victorian sign and building with a rounded snow-covered shingle roof that was triangular and it's windows with a warm light of a fireplace and distant chatter. A red brick archway and sign made it obvious it was the entrance and when the sign when read out load said: "The Lone Village of The Nix: Amica".

Entering the town with some measured hesitation, he founded himself in a place he didn't expect to ever be for a desert kid like him.

“Why the hell does everything have to be so much bigger than me? I’m sure I’m 5.8, why is everything so freaking big?”

In the middle of a snowy log cabin village. People dressed like igloo people with fluffy rims of some kind of raccoon on their hoods with a mix of string and leather tied into the animal fur making the once living matter into a nice coat and dress. The men were pulled sheds with logs with some with green moss and snails and the women carrying yellow vases made from a strange material he hasn't seen before though it had the same color and texture as oak sap. Ordo sensing his interest in his environment, he felt the need to explain:

"Some stay in log cabins drinking their daily hot coco which is slightly infused with caffeine to help them make it through the hard day, and others stayed in both very simple and others overly elaborate igloos of brick dry ice snow."

"How do they get caffeine?"

"Trade mostly, but some managed to grow some cacao beans and tea plants in the warmest parts of the house, and when the sun comes out for the few months it does, they keep them outside in little pots."

"Speaking of pots... why do the vases look so strange. They have the same color as tree sap."

"That's because it is tree sap. I assume tree sap can't shape and form so easily from your world?"

"No, we just use it for glue, and maybe vases…. But still as glue… not the *vase* itself."

"Haha..." Ordo chuckled. ***"I would love to know more about the Géai realm."***

"Earth-"

"Remember…"

"Yeah… Géai…"

Avail walked around, the houses close together leading to a strip of stores by a slim snowy dirt street with a few sheds with gleeful wolves hungry for a dog treat and wagons which some that had iron wheels rusted beyond use. In the seemingly center of the town where the street ends into a roundabout, in the center of a roundabout is a little green patch where a green copper statue of a tall walking angelic woman covered in thin cloth. Around it lay piles of browned diverse and beautiful flowers and moldy loafs and large meals. A iron board written in a fancy font says the name: "THE WANDERING MAIDEN of The Nix, forever his sacrifice and love for us be honored in turn until the end of days."

"They really respect this statue."

"She is the people of Amica's protector. The guiding hand for the lost and scared... she is one of the few spirits that does not see evil, only the misunderstood. There is always a second chance for everyone."

"Huh..."

"She resides and her spirit travels across the entire Nix, but she is most potent and powerful here."

"Why is that?"

"Because here is where her children reside, ever thankful, ever grateful. And her in turn ever loving to her children of The Nix. Any who would harm them with malicious intent, can never find this place... that's why this the safest spot in the entire scope of Salus. The skelees have been trying to find this town for years, but never could..."

"Skelees?"

"You'll meet them on your journey, they are self-explanatory."

"So is she meant to give me a blessing? And what's the blessing for, I thought I'm meant to be fighting monsters and warlocks."

"Follow the road behind the statue and keep it straight on your mind. When you see a building with "George's Weapons and Tools", go talk to it's owner."

"Al-? Alright."

Avail heads on the pebble path behind the art piece and heads into the slim entrance between the canyons, his hand tightening on the mystical unused blade, it burning his hand slightly from it's cold touch traveling further on. He could see his breath in the air, frostbite nibbling at the edges of his nose and cheeks.

"Remember." Ordo's voice echoed in his mind, *"the blessing will give you protection, but it won't make you invincible. Use your wits and strength wisely."*

Oscar nodded with a mocking side smirk, though he knew... or just assumed Ordo couldn't see him. The town was quieter than he expected, the only sounds being the crunch of his boots on the snow and the occasional howl of the wind. He spotted the sign for "George's Weapons and Tools" and stepped into the warm embrace of the shop, the shop being built into the side of the slim canyon wall. The smell of burning wood and metalworking filled his nose, and he felt a sense of comfort in the familiarity despite the alien world around him. The shop-owner whose was facing the back of his wall crotched down to tie what he called: "blasted shoelaces".

"Hello?"

"Eh?" The owner turned around, some… big eared creature with small whiskers wearing a normal metalworker's uniform, with a sweaty bandana on his head tied in a calculatedly precise fashion. Wearing old leather boots... but his face... his-his entire head was absurd. He had the head and ears of a mouse, and though his eyes had the same irises and pupils as any human, they were mixed with orange like his profession, though green like cash. ***"What you staring at?"***

"Oh...um sorry. You just look..."

"Ahh I see, I look like an eyesore to yah, eeh?"

"No-no! You look... you look just fine, you ain't an eyesore, you seem pretty decent and-umm... "friendly".”

"Ahh friendly… friendly… haha…”

The small shop town leaned in, pushing against the counter and turning his head to look with one eye to Avail.

“You want trouble, boy, eh?”

“I… umm… I-I mean… (*sighing deeply and facing palming*)…”

The owner raises a leg to slap his knee, and laughing at Avail’s expense.

"I'm just messing around kiddo, you here for armor and supplies? Because, trust me, I got a LOT of them. People just can't appreciate quality stuff nowadays, can they? I build electric powered swords for kings, and magically enhanced clubs for trolls-"

"Trolls?" Ordo states in confusion, while watching from his magic mirror looking through Avail's eyes and hearing with Avail's ears.

"But the commoners? They see my nose and my ears, and they just walk as off the road as far from me as possible. Like-like what gives them the right to by petty like that to me, you know?"

"That's not why i'm here."

"Then why? You said the sign, right?"

The owner leaning in again and pointing aggressively to the sign while nodded his head. But Avail was looking around, almost like he was trying to avoid eye contact with the shopowner.

"Yeah, i'm just here for directions."

"Well I ain't no tour guide Rodmusian, ok. I'm a tool and weapons kind of Rodmusian, you get me?"

"Rod-must?"

Avail looking back at the shopowner, now just more confused then anything.

"Rodmusian ("rod-muss-ee-an"). You haven't heard-wow... were you born and raised under a rock kid? A talking and walking big eared and snout guy? Might have some relations with a mouse, some people thought so."

"You are a mouse, man."

"Whatever, but you should know me, right? George... George Richie? Like Oliver Richie?... The Inn company owner with that stupid white teeth smile on his poster."

George seems to curse under his breath, hitting the counter and dragging his finger nails across it, like he can't stand talking about this "Oliver"… like he's hiding something from Avail.

"I thought Salus was like, only magic and swords."

"Mate, you raised in an academy or some barn? Like some daft grey beards still teaching spells like we lot were living on Orbis? Ridiculous. "

Avail pauses for a few seconds, trying to take in the information and failing at it.

"...this place is strange..."

"You should've met stranger, kid."

"I haven't, so far you been the strangest thing I've seen... ever since I left Ordo's tower."

"OR-! Kid, you messing with me-"

"I'm not… I'm telling the truth."

George stops yelling and starts looking up and down Avail's blue wizard robes and very hat, that has glittering white shapes that only one kind of person would wear.

"You are Ordo's apprentice? (*gasp*)" George covering his face with both of his hand in a gasp, then it slowly became a snarl… quickly, George pulls out a sharp blade, shaped like a saw with a glowing blue glass jar that seems to power it.

"Are you the... WAR-WARLOCK?!"

"No! I'm Ava-"

"Come to take my stuff, just like the rest of the lot of yah! First Ordo, now his bleeding war-hungry apprentice. Nope, I don't want anything to do with you, you crazed bastard! Get out, go away. Shop's closed for today, adios, arrivederci-"

"I'm new apprentice… Avail."

George stops in his tracks, literally about to put the overused rusted bronze lock on the iron wire that closes the store opening.

"Other-another apprentice? Oh… oh no… nope, I ain't having this happen twice. I'm ending this here and now-"

"STOP THIS FOOLISHNESS!"

Ordo's voice boomed like a thunderclap and echoed in Avail's and George's eardrums, loud and all around them. George putting his palms over his ears in pain.

"What the hell? Stop screaming in my ear, you daft knob!"

Ordo realizing his tone, lowered it, and sounded calm and gentle with a breeze brushing against the ear.

"Uggh..." George growling like a tinkerer handyman's annoyance.

"(*sighs*) Sorry my friend... but you lost yourself in fear, and I cannot allow you to hurt the only one that has the will to end Warlock Sid's rule."

"He-he is that guy? He's a brat kid! (*Goes into a mumble*) And even looks pretty hot-headed too."

"That kid is from Géai ("chai"), the very far away world of non-magical and less blessed ones, the naive ones Very separate from our kind of decency and grace."

"Géai? I never heard of a Géai before. But hey, I guess i'm the right age to keep learning things... heh... ahhh.... But the kid... is he ready? is it safe?"

"He is, and I advise you to trade with him, and show him the way to the Snow Maiden. He needs the protection in order to face Sid and his *wretched* allies."

"Right, right... just... stop saying THAT name, alright? We all know you can't back it up anymore..."

George retreats back into the shop, looking around for things he could sale. The shop was cramped under dim orange light, which was threaten to be blown out by the concentrated freezing wind of the natural stone canyon. Even though small, every corner held something of interest. Racks of gleaming weapons reflected the flickering light of the forge in the back, while metal and wooden tools hung from the carved decorative beams from the ceiling like trophies from a hunter's lodge. The walls were lined with shelves of ancient tomes and scrolls, each one beckoning with the promise of forgotten specialized knowledge. The mouseman, George, straightened up and wiped his hands on his apron.

"ok, kid. (*smacking his chipped lips*) what you want?"

George leaning on a chair in the store, arms laid out as they and his greasy gloves hold his rugged frame.

"Um... your best weapon? Also, a shield?"

"Got no shields, another place sells those. But I could sell you weapons, and also gadgets. Seems like no one wants those anymore... wait... (*George's eyes are caught*) but that blade... oh! Let me see that!"

"Ok..."

He showed him the Aether Blade .

"Black obsidian and glowing blue cracks in the material, becoming the rarest material in the cosmos: Aether. Powerful, *powerful* stuff lad. Ow-!"

George touches it's edge and nearly cuts his finger off even with a glove... his finger bleeding.

"Shit! This is sharp... still sharp even with blue cracks in it. I barely even touched it... but... (*kissing his wound*) hmm... I shouldn't be surprised. The damn thing is quite a gobsmacking thing indeed."

"Gob-gobsma-smack-gob...? The *hell* you saying?"

"Shut up... those are serious words on this island, alright?... you uncultured swine. HAHA-just pulling your leg, kid!... But seriously, be quiet for a sec... let's see..."

George seems to take a good ten minutes looking and measuring the blade, looking through a book on materials before finding...

"Ah yes! The ether stone! Made by the blood of darkness of the depths, and by the holy light of the highest palace. It's incredible! Ordo trusted you with *this*!?"

"Umm... yeah."

Avail rubbing the back of his shoulder awkwardly and looking away to the side.

"Yeah he did."

"Hmph... well I feel like you need a counterpart. How about I give you a hammer, huh? It's a golden one, would match with the black and blue you got going on, huh."

"Is it good?"

"Hell yeah, it's good. The big lad you see before yah made it."

Him having a short chuckle ending, which abruptly ended with a voice crack and shallowing air.

"So... ok, i'll take it. Just promise me it's durable."

George leans in far down, and bangs his hands against the counter, shaking it a bit, as his own unique form of a retort.

"You think i'm selling fraud weapons? This ain't a stupid scamming skelee camp or some naive sellers from the Fairy Forrest! Or them bastards under water... damn mer-people and their bronze tridents... pieces of crap... anyway! I'll get it for you."

He goes to the back of his shop behind a wooden door with the sign of yellow bark "Open" spinning around now saying "Closed, MOVE ALONG". Now coming back in with a red velvet blank over what seems to be a decent sized hammer underneath. "My lad, witness a true forgemaster's work!" He dramatically pulls the velvet blanket off to reveal a golden glowing hammer, with a large red jewel on both it's flat sides, sharp enough on end to act like a spear.

"This is cool! I'll take it... here."

Pays George with the gold that Ordo gave him before he fell down from the tower, and George starts counting and nodding his head... before taking the whole bag and throwing behind him and over the counter.

"H-hey!"

George doesn't even respond and just grins wickedly, while Avail just grunts and takes the hammer roughly and stuffs it into his robe's pockets before starting to rushing off, when George pipes up.

"Well, if you're looking for a blessing from the Wandering Maiden, you're in luck!"

George said, his voice raising an rough octave.

"But first, you'll need to prove your worth. You can't just waltz up to her and demand her protection. She's not a wish granting fairy in a bottle, you know." Avail does a dramatic teen sigh with his eyes nearly rolling behind his head with his mouth ajar and walks back."

"Ok... so how?"

"How what?"

Avail glared at George, the warmth of the shop's fireplace contrasting with the icy grip of his anxiety. ***"How do I prove my worth?"*** he asked, his voice shaking slightly.

George chuckled, his eyes gleaming with amusement. ***"Ah, a challenge! Just the sort of thing that tickles a young lad's fancy, eh?... eh?!... ehh… you don't care, do you lad?"***

"Get on with it."

"Right, right… You see, the Maiden only blesses those who demonstrate valor and compassion. You must perform a task that embodies both. I've got just the thing."

"A hero? How do you know i'm a hero? Oh, because of Ordo told you too you when I wasn't looking, right? Or were you messing with me the whole time with that

"OHH You are the Warlock! You piece of crap, bugger off!" ***."***

"First…"

The savvy shop owner pauses, and waving his pointer finger around, struggling to find the right words before he speaks.

"Don't make impressions you are terrible at, lad…. Secondly… A traveler wouldn't be needing the maiden's blessing now, would he?"

"Oh god... what the heck did I get myself into?" Avail sighed, as he rubbed his forehead with palm of his hand. The mouseman, George, looked at him with a glint in his eye, a knowing smile playing on his whiskered face.

"Don't you worry, I've got the perfect task for ya. It's a bit of a quest, really."

“(*sigh)… what’s that a task? I’ll get it done. *Probably…”*

“There's a village nearby, the people there are in desperate need of some supplies before the next snowstorm hits. If you can help them... and you know, test my weapon out. Also, please keep that blade out when you go into Amica. Just like to hear what the old coopers and mid-wives have to say about (*pointing to the Ather blade*) that."

"Sure, sure... where do I get the supplies?"

"Ah, the supplies are the easy part. I've got a cartload of them buggers right here. Was going to do it myself after closing time, my home past that place you're heading see." George said, pointing to a large wooden cart stacked with various goods. ***"But the journey there is where you'll have to prove yourself. The path to the village is treacherous and rumored to be haunted by the spirits of those who didn't survive the last blizzard."***

Avail nodded, begrudgingly as he stretched his still solitary elbows back into place. He grabbed the reins of the cart and pushed it out into the cold embrace of the town square. The cart was surprisingly light, thanks to the enchantments Ordo had placed on his robes, making the journey seem less daunting. The cobblestone path grew narrower as it left the town, weaving through the canyon walls like a serpent's tail. The silence was eerie, broken only by the crunch of the cart's wheels on the snow and the occasional howl of the wind.

The path grew steeper and more treacherous, the snow piling higher and higher. The walls of the canyon grew closer, and the shadows grew longer, stretching out like dark fingers reaching for him. He shivered, not from the cold but from the feeling of being watched. He clutched the handle of the cart tightly, his heart racing as he pushed onward. He didn't dare to look back, fearing what he might see. The wind grew colder, whispering secrets of the lost souls trapped in the blizzards of the past.

As Avail ventured deeper into the canyon, the light from the setting sun painted the snow a fiery orange, casting an eerie glow on the path ahead. His breath fogged in the air, and the sound of his own heartbeat echoed in his ears. Despite the fear, he pushed the cart forward,

driven by the promise of a blessing and the hope of helping those in need. Then closing his eyes against the frost, he still marched forward with darker secrets become more potent and more powerful, he could feel his soul unravel against the universe. But quickly as the wind came blowing into his face, he could feel it vanish and he open his eyes to see he was in the center of the town of Amica, turning his head awkwardly to see the angel statue was behind him, looking down upon him. Or maybe it was his imagination, Avail would ponder to himself as he refocus his attention with a band of surrounding villagers greeting their... savior? No... their deliverer of more haggis and taters. The discovery to Avail was undoubtful confusing as the rest of this place was, but more confounding was what they gave him for his hard work.

A bowl of... gold... haggis... though strange the meal the villagers made for him was nice, haggis with sides of tatties and heeps (mashed potatoes and mashed turnips).

The journey to the neighboring village was indeed a trek, but the warmth of his newfound purpose kept Avail's spirits from freezing over. The path was as George had described, fraught with danger and whispers of the supernatural. "It was as if the very essence of the gold-infused haggis fueled his strength". Avail would think this as a joke, finding an excuse for this dumb trip.

He couldn't help but chuckle at the absurdity of it all. A little while later he returned to George with his golden haggis, which George interest working on this mechanical golem of steel plates, gears, and flame... taking off it's right arm and tinkering with it with his gadgets and steampunk gizmos and things that can only exist in a fairy tale.

"I got your prize, clerk. Now is this it, or is there more?" Avail saying this with his head tilted forward, staring with his mouth ajar at the mouseman forger.

George looked up from his work, his whiskers twitching with excitement. ***"Nah nah... you got all you needed, bud."***

"Don't call me bud."

"...friend? customer? Great Apprentice? brute kid carrying a sword that calls himself a wizard?"

"Friend is fine."

"Ok, (*stretching*) ahhh..." George biting his lips before leaving through a little door to the side of his shop and walking out and throwing a blue potion that reveals a secret path.

"It was there the WHOLE FUc-FLIPING time?!"

"Hey calm down... I can't just let anyone in this prized landmark. Plus who doesn't like misadventures?"

Avail was shocked. ***"Wait... wait-wait-wait... that was not part of the trial? The whole haggis thing is not part of it?"***

"No, it wasn't kid. All she needs is you to walk up to here and you be judged right away."

"You *lied*!"

"Oh come on, it was just a good bit of fun!... and a laugh for me. And trust me... I need that with all this damned winter."

"You slimy rat!"

"Hey, no need for defamation good sir. Just follow the path here."

*"(*sigh*) Have a good day..."*

"To you, laddy… it will be a fine day. A great day raising and falling over the horizon like a fast stead of flam-."

“Byeeee!”

Avail picked up his blade with a sense of irritation and followed the path revealed by the potion. It led him to a serene clearing, the snowfall seemingly lighter and the air quieter. In the center of the clearing stood a grand oak tree, its branches laden with snow that looked like crystallized tears. Under the tree was a simple stone altar, with the same glowing blue lines that adorned the Blade of The Depths. He approached the altar with caution, his heart racing as he felt a powerful presence watching over him.

As he reached the altar, a soft, melodious voice filled his mind. Though it had no words, only a breath of feeling... it spoke with a different tongue but Avail could feel the love in her voice... her love for all things.

The Wandering Maiden's presence washed over him like a warm embrace, her essence gentle yet firm. Her eyes, though made of stone, seemed to bore into his soul, scrutinizing his intentions. The silence grew thicker, and for a moment, he felt as if he was the only living being in the universe, his heart beating in time with the rhythm of her invisible voice.

"What the hell just happened?"

"You are confused? You should feel a weight lifted for a little bit, with who she rejects, which are usually wicked in intent. Since the Warlock of Gravis and his minions have such intent, they cannot find or locate this place. Her magic is strong here, but really only here, her power cannot protect you everywhere, especially in Gravis, where the Warlock's power is greatest and indeed the most terrible."

"Gravis?"

"You will see it when we get too it..."

"Hmm... I feel more powerful than before. Is it nearby?"

"Sort of near, we are in the middle of the mountains, so it is somewhat of a trip, but yes."

The villagers that say goodbye to Avail are mostly bearded and the size and figure of door dwarfs if they decided to look like german gnomes, with tall cone red hats with fur coats. The tallest out of the dwarfs wearing a 18th century British navy bowed hat walks to Avail that was almost at the boy's height, and shakes hands with him. He puts his hands on the collar of his shirt, and shifting it around, he begins to speak announcing way.

"Ay caddie, thank thee kindly for your generous deliver of our town's precious and trophy. I wish I can offer more in defense and magic, but i'm a simple mayor, bard, and occasional drinking record breaker. But I may give you a portion of our food supply for your long journey across the scope of Salus, and at least out of these troublesome mountains."

"What's in it?"

"Whole potatoes, four bagged seasoned haggises, a big ol bag sunflower seeds for the mornings. Both roasted almonds and chocolate almonds to keep your spirits up in the dawn of noon and end of afternoon. A big pouch of our special spring water, a spring seasonal which you are lucky it's that time of the year. And finally, spirited bread, a combination of sweet honey of the North, low wheat and gluten to make your belly not swell but happy. And don't forget most the most important ingredient *(*leans in to say*):* ***Spirit Leaf, oh my my..."***

The mayor backing away in dramatic fashion, putting a bit of a show as he speaks again

*"…an middle eastern specialty from the Fairy woodland. It gives good energy and will make you feel *unstoppable* through walking day and night. Haha… you can thank Mrs. Becker and Mrs. Hearthman for the more delicate treats."*

Avail looking to the right of the mayor to see two stout older ladies wearing aprons and white bonnet hats are by one of the warm cottage entrances under shade, weaving excitedly.

"Thank Mr. Bauer Werner for the supply of almonds and sunflower seeds… over there."

Avail looking to where the mayor was gesturing, which was far behind him to see an older redneck farmer, who looks up with his wild leather hat wearing high boots and laying on his pitchfork impelled into the snow. Looking up and being somewhat anti-social, he raises his hand quickly and gradually lets it fall down as he lays his head on his arms while balancing himself on the farming tool and just falling asleep. Avail more impressed than surprised, the mayor leaning in with the back of his hand on one of the sides of his lips.

"*(*whispers*)* ***He may be a quiet one, but he is a real worker. We are real glad he came here."***

"Well alright…"

Avail patting himself down awkwardly like he didn't know how to proceed, then realizing what he want to say and raising his head.

"By the way, where do you suggest I travel to, what's the safest path?"

"Well to the north right there where the main gate is..."

"Ok... hmm... how about the way to Gravis."

"Gra-Gravis?! The Land of Ashen Stone and Dips? Why in Ordo's beard would possess you to want to go there?"

"To test myself, I think i'm ready."

"You're not ready…" Ordo whispers in Avail's mind, but Avail ignores continues talking with George.

"Well... if you mean to go there I won't stop ya, but don't blame me for throwing yourself at Grim's hands and to heaven's gates. It's at the right end of the town, when you get to the statue, follow the mountain path, be careful not to get lost and follow the marks of the Amicaian travelers and then the Skelees. When you see black flags and red markings, and skull crosses on the mountain walls, that's when you know you are near."

"Avail! What are trying to accomplish here?" Ordo shouted in Avail's mind. But Avail ignores him and heads to the path, waving bye to the worried mayor and the short villagers as he heads down the more ominous and dangerous path, splitting up into multiple paths many times, and a true mental test to grasp. But then Avail makes it near the gate which is in the distance, but then suddenly a beam of light with a thundering strike of lightning hits in-front of Avail... and from the thin curtain of smoke emerges the tall Wizard Ordo still holding his walking stick under his right shoulder.

"Are you utterly mad, Oscar?! Why won't you heed my advice?"

"I thought I was called Avail now, being an apprentice and all. He's the villain, I have the resources and equipment, and he is distracted! I'm ready, so let me go."

"Y-yes...but Avail, you need the key pieces in order to unlock that infernal castle's main gate, you can't get in without them, there is no other entrance other than the front gate."

"Then I'll break the doors through..."

"You haven't even fought a Skelee, or even an orc, goblin, or even a demon soldier or bounty hunter. What makes you think you can match wits with the most powerful dark magic sorcerer in Salus, boy?!"

"I got the best sword in the cosmos, it'll do most of the work, so my strength shouldn't matter."

"It isn't... but besides that, A tool no matter the craft, is only ever good as the one who guides it to it's intended target."

"Well I am good! I have done fencing and boxing classes... I can at least try, get out of the way."

"No! This is insanity, you have no idea how outmatched you are. You have zero experience, if you go around Salus you will at least get experience fighting more and more, then learning to know your abilities. Don't ever underestimate Warlock Sid, he is beyond cunning and skilled. As soon as he knows you are in his territory and he will optimize your weakness to his absolute advantage and make sure you regret ever testing him."

*"Well I can *sneak* my way through."*

"His courtyard is a yard of weapons, trebuchets of burning coal and rock, and a thousand strong of undead soldiers awaiting to see someone to kill and plunder. And his castle is worse, designed and magically enchanted to reform and reshape to trap and destroy anyone other then Sid or someone he deems an ally. You won't make it even 20 feet alive..."

"Nonsense, I got like a mythical blade and superpowers, I'm totally dogging on this final boss."

"NO wait! Avail! AVAIL!!!"

A thunder strike claps and lightning hits a side of an mountain as Avail runs past Ordo and leaves the old man in a mental scramble. Avail soon reaches the main entrance, and just like what Chaucer said, the very soil was burnt grey stone and sand. Wavy hills and trenches and left over wood and metal machines of war like a battle that never ended. Though strange with perfect leveled concrete roads that contrast the rest of the miserable place, very unlike the gravel grounds in Amica and the mountain passes.

The place loomed over Avail like the cold wind, very uninviting as Avail was walking between deep groves in the ashen pale gray earth like they were once river beds. The sky carried the grey clouds of Amica and the Nix, but nary a flake of snow touched anywhere here. It was just cloudy, damp and warm... as uncomfortable as it could possibly be. Smoke and tar filled the air, with sound of far off machinery roaring and powering down over and over keeping the mind from lingering on any cozy thought. Triangular black flags with worn edges pointed down on rusted metal poles, with metal woven symbols on the edges of knifes, arrows, and x crosses… and in the middle a great red stitched omega symbol, a symbol of war, marked diagonal with a straight red line.

Walking along the rocky grey small man-man canyon, Avail notices small "funny" figures in the distance, stubby dwarf looking things, gossiping and messing about around a large fire that its tip stands high above the heads of the armored dwarf figures up top a wooden log stacked watchtower. Avail grins with his two dimples, more certain than ever this will be a cake walk.

“Easy money…”

Avail sees a ladder that leads up the tower, and he rushes to it, barely even keeping mind of anyone who could see him… and runs up the ladder. When nearly there, under a square opening that leads to the platform the enemies’ are standing on, Avail jumps up through the opening and onto the oak wood platform.

"Ay! Your guys day are numbered! I'm Avail, apprentice of the greatest wizard. And I'm here to KICK ALL YOU'RE ASSES! VILLAINS!"

He looks around and looks at their faces… they are not alive… they were skeletons, surken and smaller… but had a red glow in their eyes… undead. But terrifying and evil, they had a strange goofy stature for undead warriors. Stubby, small… and definitely loud… They were earing seemingly stolen iron armor, chain mail, and gambeson cloth under armor… like the Normans from Europe Sean was taught about in his history class… though he only remembered the paintings, never anything else because he absolutely failed that course.

Avail was so busy looking at their appearances, that another one from a tower right beside that one with only one guard, saw Avail and with high-pitch goblin like grunt, he sounded a ivory horn that was so loud that he nearly broke Avail's eardrums. The soldiers around him picked up their polearms, shortblades and longshields and talked in a grumpy and incoherent language. Avail thrown himself into combat, the little experience he had and Ordo's enchantments for his physical strength and protection of the Snow Maidan allowed him to kill a few… though clumsy. Blocking a spear with his blade on the spear base, and kicking that one off the tower, while he stabbed the second one through the forehead and the other side. But this gave a chance for the third to bumrush him and tore a hole through Avail's blue garment, which if he hadn't dodge would have put a hole through his stomach. Avail angry, he grabbed the third and spined around and threw him at the other one about to shoot an arrow through Avail's skull. Avail jumping off to the ground, tinging his legs a bit, which had Avail's get really excited. Avail never felt the thrill of a fight before, and it was getting more and more entertaining, though to the dismay of Ordo.

Avail screamed out, but then felt a blade cut his back and heard the happy cheers of one the armored skeleton dwarf behind, mumbling and making seemingly victorious sounds in its strange goofy language. Avail turning around with a wide grin turns around and tries to cut the skelee, but he dodges and then strangely puts his hands on the sides of it's head and wiggles it's fingers, makes silly noises with it's mouth like he still had a tongue… the skelee was teasing him. Avail tried to hit it, but the skelee kept dodging and making noises and laughing at Avail.

"Enough games, idiot!"

Avail rushes and grabs the skelee with his superior strength and throws him on the side of the canyon rock and pushes it, over and over again, until it can't raise it's weapon… then with his blade, he cries out in a sound yell and cuts the undead soldier's head clean off. No longer a dangerous mischievous creature, the red glow from their silly face now empty and black; now just a corpse. But Avail does care, he celebrates his victory.

"Yeah-YEAH!! I DID IT! I DID IT!"

"Avail-"

"Take this you damn bastard!"

Avail spits on the unmoving lifeless skeleton, which it could not defend itself.

"Ha! Serves you right for trying to kill me!"

"Avaaiill-"

"ORDO? DID YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENED!-Oh oh course you did! Oh man… I FREAKING DESTROYED THOSE MONSTERS! I NEVER FELT LIKE THAT EVER!"

"AVAIL!"

"Oh what now!? I defeated a bunch them! Those powers you gave me are so fricking COOL! I shot air from my hands, I-I think? Oh man! I never thought this was going to happen to me, of all people-"

"Avail."

"What? What you going to say to me now, huh? Thank you for the powers, but you going to mad at me for everything-"

Ordo interrupted, with a stern tone... but calmed down and stated plainly.

"You shouldn't celebrate. And moreover, *spit* on them. They were people once, villagers... a laboring lumberjack, a tired widow's maid, a rushing delivery boy giving out milk bottles and 5 mona cent loafs of fresh bread. They are people who died, Avail. And Sid did the worst sin of all, he dug into their graves disguised as a mere wandering old traveler, snatched their bodies and dragged them by cart in the dead of night. Doing this for seven full moons, until he built his army of undead.

They are far lesser then they were in life, but they are innocent. So please, do not disrespect them... their are families that still mourn them and wish them returned."

Avail felt great sadness, something he never felt before... like any moral person, he felt guilty. But his eagerness, made it so it did not last very long…

"I'm... i'm sorry. I didn't-I didn't know."

"Hah... I said that many times myself. But we never know, but we still assume to know better and so we act like fools. But feel that guilt, let it broaden and strengthen your mind, and use it as a stepping stone to see the way forward."

Though feeling guilty... something slightly changed in Avail, returning to his ways.

"But.. they are still dead... and they are my harassing the civilian locals."

"Yes Avail, but they still were once human beings, we must feel some empathy and know the real enemy."

"Yeah, but they are DEAD. I'm not killing living people, i'm restoring order, yes?"

"Well... technically yes-"

"Then let i'll keep destroying those wretched creatures and send them back to hell!"

Ordo can only groan as Avail continues along the trenches and encounters yet another catapult and a few more Skelees squirming around to prepare their weapons. Avail felt like he was overwhelmed, and so had enough… he put his hand in one of his deep wizarding

cloak garments, his large open holes of his sleeves being folded as he scuttered his around. Until saying “ah ha!” and pulling out a glowing blue potion,

“Avail! Don’t use that yet.”

Avail looked at it for a sec, and see the enemies up ahead, shrugging his shoulders and drinking it anyway.

“Fool! You don’t listen, have you forgotten you’re training? There are more dangerous things than these muppets.”

“Nah man, you can make more.”

“You think I can make more? That wasn’t made nor it’s ingredients are from this land! You daft incomprehensibly naive-!”

Avail ignores, and charges at the skelee platoons flags of Sid’s empire flying and charging toward him in different directions, others outside of the large ditch. Them standing on the grey canyon slopes with feathered helms, throwing their arms toward Avail’s direction to direct the ones on the trebuchets loading giant rocks of debris and others making noises as they aimed their bows with point board steel tips that look lethal. Avail cut each one down, though powerful, it was awkward and very slow… but he imagined to gain some progress. Blocking and then attacking, cutting two to four, and then repeating the process once more. Eventually out of that death corner, he craved his way through and defeated all of them. In was the most grueling and exhausting experience in his entire life, and he nearly felt like fainting… he looked to the sky but only found clouds, not even stars to remind him of home.

“(*breathing hard*) (*gasping*) Oh god man…”

“What that “easy”, youngling? You are such a cooper’s son, you nearly got yourself *killed* with your complete unmanaged rashness!”

“But I *survived*. I defeated all of his forces.”

*"(*old wise scoff*) That was the appetizer. Most of The Warlock's forces aren't even in Gravis. He is focusing his efforts in conquering Salus and giving his allies extra troops. What you just fought was the average guard force at best."*

"Oh… oh shit."

"That's why I don't want you stuck here, Avail. You need to leave."

"I literally went through an army, I can't go back now!'

"The youth always says such things, but the choice is still always there… and it should be considered."

Hours later, going close to the western southern edge of Salus, Avail weakly walking up a cliff could finally see a great gothic castle up ahead, with dark grey walls and pointed and winding exterior that distinctly stand out around the light grey flat stone trenches and cliffs; it's demonic-like gate bridge wide open. It was still far, but he felt like his journey was over, however, he was mistaken. A loud bang of against solid rock could be heard from his side, and Avail turned to see what it was. Out in the far distance, a giant man with glowing eyes with a feathered helm on a pointed rocky cliff shaped like a arrowhead, a bolt of purple lightning striking behind him under a blacken clouded sky. He wielded on his right hand a great mace with sharp deadly spikes, and a loud whip crackling with lightning. He jumped high into the air, and descended over 3 hundred feet across before landing in a dramatic fashion right in front of Avail

The large skeleton with roman-like armor, with a chest plate with now aged green bronze engraving of a chest and abs with the red symbol of the Sid's army. And a metal Nordic helm that covered the sides of his head and the place where his nose should be, red and black feathers With a terrifying face and tightly wielding his deadly iron mace, he loomed like a storm cloud over Avail.

"Oh no… Sid's greatest physical weapon… Sceletus."

Avail charges at the giant skeleton, lifting his blade up into the air.

"YAHHHH!!"

Sceletus not moving from his spot, Avail nearly about to cut his exposed lower leg. But when nearly at the moment of impact, Sceletus sides steps away, and Avail is going past him. When he realized he completely missed, he gets distracted and loses his footing, tumbling down and hitting the ground square on his face. Sceletus just leers and laughs at this stupid display, which sets off Avail. He aims his hands behind his feet, and unleashes a blast of air… sending him up to Sceletus's face. Avail switching his blade around to thrust it downward into the foe's forehead. ***"Take this you stupid big fat-AGH!"***

Sceletus swats him like a fly. Him hitting a wall. Avail tries to get up, but Sceletus approaches him with a terrifying speed, and hurls his mace at Avail. Avail seeing his life flash before his eyes, is caught and his body hitting the flat area, barely messing the sharp spikes; but still sent hurtling into a high part of the stone wall of the arena… making a carter in it Avail is trapped in. Avail tries to get out, but the mace is sent digging through the stone and hitting him on the side; bouncing him on the ground and into the air before dragging on a cliffside plateau, stone ripping off the ground in a rock dust cloud.

Avail was despite the damage he just taken, pulled himself up from the carved trail in the hard stone left by the results of Sceletus's strength. The apprentice Avail's face was covered in dirt, the clean edges of his are torn and stretched up. The once bright blue robe now covered in muck, half of it nearly torn off, tearing his own shirt from the rocks refusing to let go; a corner of his round dark blue cone hat stuck under a crack crafted from Avail's last landing, the stars and crecent moons once bright gleaming gold now dirty and crackled. Eyes blood shot from the rock dust that entered his eyes, coughing up blood, struggling to breath. He tries to pull the hat out from the crack in the stone, but it held on tight… It couldn't let go, couldn't give up. Avail looks back to Sceletus, and he pauses, and he gradually gains speed and goes into a full sprint.

"No… no! I won't give up! I'm ready for *this*!"

Avail gets to the edge, and already prepared, he cuffs his shaking hands together, wrist to wrist, and sends a air blast behind him to launch himself to Sceletus's head again. Then like as he flying the air and the clouds partings slightly the show the moon as Avail flew into it's center, then flying down to Sceletus's face. But that wasn't Avail's target, he cuffed his wrists together again and with a blast of air which directions downward diagonally. Then pulling his sword and making himself spin in a revolution like a missile as he aimed the blade straight in-front of him for Sceletus's knee. He was almost there, near enough to put damage on this powerful foe, that he knows how much he is going to gloat over this over Ordo… how much he will gloat over this with his buddies at school, when he leaves this accursed place. He isn't a coward, he's just like the quarterbacks and lady go-getters. He is strong… strong… and courageous. He'll show them-he…

And like all dreams, people have to wake, and reality has to come back, and have it's fun with you and it's inevitable victory. Sceletus with an unholy speed knees him perfectly in the face and avoid the powerful blade. This sending Avail high in the sky, nearing reaching the clouds… Avail's eyes being overwhelmed by the moon's light, before pausing mid-air and him now falling fast to the ground below. And Sceletus with a poker face, waits until Avail is perfectly below his head, then slamming his giant mace into Avail's back in a blink of the eye into the ground… creating yet another small crater. Avail attempts to shake off the massive pain in his back, burnt holes on the back of his clothing. He tries to push himself up but is slammed down by Sceletus's mace, him holding both handed with such force that blew wind in multiple directions… nearly flattening him. Sceletus finally having enough with playing around, pushing the mace down on Avail like giant metal boulder on Avail's head and back… yelping in pain and begging for mercy. Finally, the great skeleton taking the mace off, with the only thing he considers fun about his job now done, and now he has to follow orders.

But somehow, Avail pushes himself up, even with red bruises where holes should be on his back. Avail weakly, raises his sword to fight, but the great skeleton general is running out of patience. He whips the ground as Avail approaches, building up purple sparks that fly out of the iron whip… Avail with no fear or self-preservation, keeps moving forward even with a limp and barely able to breath. His own vision and the objects around become more and more blurred and distant while he hears the electric cracks getting louder and louder. He nearly is there, he must not give up… he raises his blade, and he cuts… stone. The whip hits the ground, breaking it while a stray purple sparks light up it's ruin. Then the whip hits down upon Avail, and he fierce burning electricity shots from his legs to his fingers and head. He screams in burning pain, and falls. And then Sceletus does it again, covering's Avail's body with a blanket of purple electricity again… and then again, he yells in agony and fells his flesh smoking. And then again… and then again… again… again… every strike a mistake

that Avail made. Avail's disrespect to Ordo, Avail's decision to come to Gravis with no preparation, Avail's choice to use the potion to earlier, Avail's disrespect to the people who lived on his island, and Oscar's disrespect to the people in his life on Earth. Every agony, every pain imaginable, and now, Avail was done.

The shadow visage of the giant Sceletus reached with his grim yellow skeletal hands covered in ancient dark runes and picked him up by the back of what was left of his long clothing with the tips of his pointed, claw-like fingers. Raising him up till his body was dangling in front of Sceletus's wraith-like face. The purple glow from his empty sockets, analyzing that foolish little turd, that would dare to question his lord's will.

"You thought this little enchantment was going to save you, human boy? HAHA-"

Sceletus raised his head and chackled with a harsh deep voice into the sky.

"The Snow Maiden is powerful, her influence is felt everywhere for those who bend their knee to cowardice and pacifism. But here, it is nothing more than a thin sheet of paper armor."

He looked at Avail, seeing him week there… then looking over away, his great height allowing him to see the piles of his men that Avail slain. Then, a crooked thought came into the skull of mighty The Giant That Leads Undead, General of Sid: Sceletus.

"Now… now… you would be a fine soldier, would you mortal boy!"

He then spit on his finger, it now covered in a shadowy bubbling goo. And he poked his pointer finger, stabbing Avail through his chest and into his heart, and then pulling out. Sceletus then left him drop 30 feet to the ground, hitting it hard, Avail wincing in pure pain. Sceletus snickered at the pathetic display of a troublesome fly, Avail trying to pull away toward the direction he came from. The armored titanic figure laughed as he watched him struggle, and slammed his giant skeletal foot against Avail's legs, making his cry in pain and then throwing him around like a dog playing with his chew toy. Avail now a bloodied mess, still hanging on to laugh, Sceletus kneeling down and looking upon him like all his other victims, grinning with his skinless teeth.

"You survived long… but you are not match for me. Nor for my master… what did you think you would accomplish coming here? To free your people, to save this island from me and the great Warlock Sid? You are a true fool… but I commend your bravery. In fact, that bravery and power you shown is going to be a very useful thing soon. Once you are done crying and making a scene, come back upstairs and I'll tell you your role, maggot."

After that, General Sceletus stood up… and kicked Avail through one of the large crevices along the large area. Avail fell and bumped into many jaded rocks and walls, falling deep and deeper until hitting ground. He was in the deep, deep underground, where no light shinned… it felt nearly hopeless. Avail got up weakly, coughing up blood, then realizing he felt a sizzling pain on his chest. He pulled his now worn clothing around his chest, pulling off the undergarme-nts and the earthling clothing he came with. Then a saw it, a blooding pulsing wound, and black marks moving their way around his chest… like a parasite was attached to him. He looked at his hands, and saw his skin was slightly greener.

"You realized it now, don't you Avail?"

"I'm.. dy… dying?"

Avail sounded completely shocked… and for the first time, terrified.

"Yes. You are going through the process of undeath."

"Wh-(*gasping*)-wh-wat?"

"It's the Undead Curse. Something that would have been a thing of the past, if my apprent- The Warlock hadn't rediscovered and brought it back. I can be cured, just hang on… I'll come there and get you out of there."

"Get-get me… no… I'm…"

"Oscar, you need help."

"No… no! I don-don't!..."

A sharp pain coursed through Avail, and made him fall to the floor.

"Egah!.. crap… I… I need help-"

"HahaHAHAHAHAAaaa!..."

A strange voice suddenly chimed, but it wasn't Ordo or any thing there. No one was around.

"Look up, kid."

Avail then looked up and saw a metal rounded speaker, though more like a metal worn covered in strange runes, but it had a electric 1800s light on top of it. It had power but was influenced by magic to be advanced enough for the strange speaker's needs."

"There we go... good boy..."

"What the-egahh!..."

Avail's pain kept him on the ground and voiceless, struggling to push himself up.

*"Ooh... oooh my... what a *damned* day this has been, huh? I sense Ordo entering and booted up my looking glass... and instead of a terrifying enraged god wizard on my front porch. A teen villager with some kind enhancements running around exposed like a bear cub in the middle of a village... and killing my soldiers? Flinging that rocky ore blade like you were hitting a bag filled with sweet treats, and jumping around everywhere? And really needing everyone to know how "special" you are... li-like screaming to the heavens "Someone please kill me! I'm right here! Shoot me, shoot me!"....*
*HAHAhaaa! How long have you *even* had a sword?"*

"So you are the Warlock Sid?"

*"Shut it, brat. I'm *speaking*."*

Sid says angrily and harshly in a shrill voice, but then calming into a more relaxed authoritative tone

"But you asked the question."

"*...Rhetorical... now... heehah...*

Hah... You really had me for a whirl.

*It's a good thing I contacted some decent friends after I saw you, I'm glad they are relieved to know they have a new walking practice target running around, wearing that *UNDESERVED* conned hat... I'll make sure they put holes through that too. But... hmm... it's not really surprising, isn't it? Wearing royal blue wizarding robes? Haha... a short-tempered, fatherless bruthish son like you... an apprentice of the great Supreme Sorcerer Ordo, island former. Founder and ruler of all Salus, the lead member of the Wizard Governing Council of Orbis... you must be desperate... and fucking *stupid*."*

"Who are you even trying to tal-"

*"You think I don't know? You entered *my* domain and think me a dumb dumb? Stop hiding Ordo, I *feel* your presence... I know you can hear me. SHOW YOURSELF!"*

"He can't hear me Avail, I won't entertain him, and you need to as well."

"Orrrrddoooo... Orrrrrrrrdooooooooo... where are yooouuu...?"

"He ain't listening."

Sid just arrogantly scoffs and proceeds.

*"Well, Ordo. This kid isn't going to do anything. By sending him here, you just gave up your chances at a surprise attack. Like I wasn't going to know anyway. I know you looking for the keys... and I know you are in no condition you can't fight my... hmm... "associates". Give up and surrender, because my *wrath* is going to be so much worse against you if you resist. And I'll see you soon, you brutish, unmannered dolt of an excuse Ordo had the guile to dress in our-... *HIS* attire.*

*(*ahem*) well... more realistically... I'll see your body, because you'll probably be somewhere else by the time I see your cold dead corpse on my desk. Make sure you have nice cozy rest..."*

Suddenly the intercom stopped, and everything went silent. Avail knew he had to leave… he walked into a tunnel… passing by the tight rounded walls which holes in them lead into other tunnels that seemed to span for miles. He was determined, he kept going… he walked over a bridge and looked down to see bridges to other levels that just kept going and going down into there was no light at all. He shrugged weakly, and walked… and walked… a patrol came by, and he threw himself into a small cramped hole… which kept his secure from them, but made his condition worse. He pulled himself out, then went again. Going into another cave, walking down… vision blurry… hands cold… no heat, no warmth… cold. He walked down, and then up, then down, up, up, down, down, right, left, right… down? But didn't he just go down? Or did he go up?... this cave looked familiar. Same markings, same arrows, some salt crystals and shape and broken crack in the cobblestone path. He's back at square one.

Avail traveled for 2 hours through round ceiling cavern to another cavern looking exactly alike spanning miles. He could barely walk anymore, and his body is even more strained from hiding from small platoons of three to four clinking skelees covered in iron plating with their polearms and torches constantly going through the halls. Eventually, his body couldn't handle it… his skin was getting a deathly green, like his flesh was rotting… he tripped on a broken piece of the cobblestone man-man path and fell to the ground. He tried pushing himself back up, pushing his hands against the ground to lift his arms as much as he can…

but he just couldn't and slammed his cheek against the hard stone. Though, not all was bad… small blue crystals stood above him, shining a hopeful light on him. It wasn't much, but it made him calm even with the pain all over his body. Then, in explosion of blue smoke, Ordo appeared with his limp.

*"Oh you poor boy… why did you have to get like this?... (*sigh*)… come on, you will not be staying here."*

Ordo struggled to lift Avail up, only having the one working leg. But, with his long built up courage and experience with the strangest and craziest the universe had to offer. He picked up Avail, and put him on his shoulder, beginning to cast his spell… but the spell took a lot of time, and a lot of time to build up the energy in his weaken state.

"Reksniñ qudretinen meni yiber… beden ve ruh evge yolla, men anda qalpağımnı-"

But before Ordo could finish, a platoon of skeles come up behind him and Ordo is forced to flee. Knowing he can't outrun the fiends, he forms a ball of fire from his only useable arm other than the one holding his walking stick and throws it infront of the skeles, blocking the wall. But the look around and talk in shrill high voices to each other and run the around way to find a path. Ordo knows the caves of Gravis have many different paths, and he has only bought himself a little time. Rushing as fast as he can, holding his arm again on Avail to keep him on his shoulder… limping across, he finds a thin hole in the wall and walks into it. Completely avoiding the skelees who run past him with bright orange torches… Ordo looks to see the ash trail that the torches left behind and quickly hides. He takes cover there and puts Avail away, grabbing the ash which his knows would attune to magic and focus his magic better.

"ve tayağımnı qoyam. Meni evge yolla, epimni ketir, qayğırğanlarımnıñ episini ketir, epimni ketir ve köklerniñ yarığı menim içimden aqıp, meni kerçeklikniñ haosından yol köstersin. Reksniñ qudretinen epimni evge YOLLA!"

The magic finally starts having an effect… The impaired Ordo nearly gets a polearm wicked spear put into him by a dark large half horse and half armored skeleton as he teleported away, and the spear's head impaled stuck into the curved wall, cracking the stone. Ordo appears at his tower, trying to find ways of healing Avail… laying him on his velvet floating hammock, then dashing to get some old herbs he stored and some potions. Pouring Dancing ocean flowers, Moonlight daisies, tears of unicorn, screams of bats, teeth of orcs, and a pinch of fairy dust and elven healing herbs… he makes the ancient fairy Potion of Yañıdan

Tiklev (“yawn-knee tick-cleve”). He goes to the sickly Avail, now completely green and nearly rotting… the overly careful Ordo pours the bright yellowish green liquid filled with white sparkles crackling into his mouth.

After Avail recovers, Ordo they speak to each other… Ordo sitting on the bed side while Avail is laying down under a thick silver quilt.

“I’m glad you recovered, Avail… but we have more pressing issues.”

“Why you take me out? Why not give me more potions and powers! I could of beaten that guy if I at least had *that*.”

“You need to focus on the mission”

“Then we you picked me then? If you have no confidence in me, then why?”

“I..”

“Wasn’t I special, you said that right?”

“I…I don’t know.”

“You don’t know? You just brought me, some random good for nothing high school kid here, and thought-thought it would be a Doom guy?-“

“It was my choice to be here… my choice to fight, right?”

Ordo looked at Avail in confusion, shifting on the bed side to speak to Avail face to face

“What are you-“

"It's MY choice to listen to that stupid mouse keep running his mouth about his damn life! It's MY choice to be to run in Gravis and kill everything there. It's-"

Ordo's noticed Avail's hands tightening and gripping the banket over his legs, his eyes hidden in a darkness Ordo was very familiar with.

"It's MY choice if I destroy everything and everyone… including *YOU*"

Avail after saying that felt his angry cease but now looking at Ordo's face… all he felt was a great boulder of shame. He looked down in the blanket, hiding his face from Ordo and guilt's glare. Ordo in response straightened his back and stood up, staring at Avail as he looked back up with a stern and hidden solemn expression. His lips were stoic, but his eyes were open and wide, filled with knowledge unknown and frightening to the recently titled apprentice. His height was much higher and shoulders wider than the short Avail, and the boy was much weaker than him (even when healthy). All it took would take is one bolt of magical power, and he would be a smoking skeleton heap of tar and ash. One spell, to erase this danger and keep the island stable. But… the good voices reached and rubbed Ordo's mind, and his calculative paranoia ceased. He sat back on the bedside, but with a bit of a slam instead of his gentleness from before, which threaten to make Avail roll out of the blanket and onto the marble floor.

"Was that in your dream, Sean?"

Avail raised his back up to get closer, and looked to Ordo eye to eye. But he was a bit timid and looked away when he saw some judgement from Ordo's glare.

"I… was so angry, I don't know why. I hated you in that moment, I wanted you gone out of my life for some reason. And, I slashed your back, and you laid dead. I don-don't know… (*sob*) I felt good about it. Like… like you never matter-matter to me… (*gasp*)… I… I… what's wrong with me!"

Oscar puts his hands on his head, and put his face on his lap, hiding his reddening cheeks and watery eyes.

"(*mufflied*) I'm a monster?..."

Ordo looked to him, and a soft smile come across his face. Warmth and without cruel bias… he scooched up by Oscar's leg and lifted Oscar's head to look eye to eye with him. Ordo knew now, this wasn't the boy he saw in Gravis anymore.

"Oscar… even when we can know our futures. It doesn't mean much… we still have time. Not all is doom and gloom, these memories and dark visions are wraiths that claw in and make us not have hope. There are demons in us, that want to dominate, want control… we don't fight them, Oscar. We don't… we raise above them. And hope people see more of the good in us, than the bad that will come out. But, there are ways we must be better, things we can control. You can't fully control those dark thoughts, Oscar… but, you can control your beliefs, your attention, your choices. And that's we can really ask for in this chaotic creation."

Avail stayed silent, his face became normal and his whipped the last bit of salty water from his eyes.

"Welp…"

Ordo now sleepy, gets up.

"Goodnight, Oscar… we'll see about extra training tomorrow."

Ordo stretches a bit and yawns, and goes to open the bedroom door.

"No… Master Yen Ordo."

The sudden switch of respect to him shocked Ordo's systems a little, but it was a welcome change to him. He turned to smile knowingly and nod…

"My name is Wizard Avail, 7th and final Apprentice of Sorcerer Ordo, and I will honor that title and duty till my death."

"You swear by it? Swear by blood? You hold it true and never part from it? An oath is a plead, a promise not man to man… but to the heavens… and when you make it… you must keep it… till *death*, Sean."

Sean thinks about this for a long time, but he can't go back now… he pulls out his Aether blade.

"I swear under the light of the Heavenly King, under his abode… I will serve as the never parting apprentice of The Lord of Salus and Wizarding Lord, Wizard Supreme Yen Ordo. And a guardian servant for the people of Salus till my very death."

Avail cutting the palm of his hand with his blade, letting the blood link from it. Ordo taking a short blade with his unbusy hand, putting it in the hand on the crutch. Holding it there as good as he can, he cuts his palm. The two walk to each other and shake their bloodied hands… blood mixed with blood… an unbreakable blood pact.

"Then I swear I will never leave you alone and never let you be under-prepared for the dangers that await you. By the will of the eternal spirit, and the heavens above… I shall not abandon my duties to you, Avail… Strongest Under The Stars"

(*END OF CHAPTER 1*)

Chapter 2, The Ascent and Through The Mountain of Three Peaks:

The next day, Avail gets up from the bed

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“No… Sceletus is not one of what The Warlock refers to as his allies. He is more of an extension of Sid himself. Rather, there are four. Magnum, Striga, Arbor, and Rosabel Draco. I’ll explain each one when he get to them. Travel to the forests of the archers near the Three Peaks Mountain, follow George’s instructions in Amica and whatever path he sets for you. You get lost, I’ll give you some directions… though you wouldn’t want that. My knowledge of the ways and paths has long been outdated.”

“Why not just teleport me there fully.”

“First, you know that will be too slow. Second, this is your training… to learn how to navigate and be able to evade and be strategic. If you can’t even plan your path through wide tall peaks and dangerous vertical snowy walls of the The Nix? Going down the Viridan River oozing with Skelees and other foes? All the way to Lake Splendor completely exposed on all fronts, and to the archer village… currently being attacked? How would you evade and hide from our enemies in their own lairs? And especially navigate through Sid’s castle, filled with unknowns and the darkest of mortal magic.”

“Ok… you’re right… but… who’s the guy I’m meant to fight there anyway?”

“Magnum is the leader of the orcs, high on his mighty mountain. He’s the first of Sid’s allies, and the dumbest… we should get rid of him first before the other four…”

“But how…?”

“Welll… -**TO BE CONTINUED…**

Chapter 3, The Crisis in The Kingdom Under The Endless Sea

Chapter 4, The Rotting In The Fairies' Own Home

Chapter 5, The City of Fire and Sin

Chapter 6, The Final Push

Epilogue